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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001667

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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, G/TIP, DRL

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TAGS: HSTC PHUM PGOV PREL KCRM KWMN SMIG AM

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF POST'S ANTI-TIP FULL-COURT PRESS

REF: A) YEREVAN 1597 B) YEREVAN 1548 C) YEREVAN 1524
D) YEREVAN 1101 E) YEREVAN 1091 F) YEREVAN
1565

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires A. F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) A November 27 meeting with the Prosecutor General (PG) suggests our series of "straight talk" interventions with GOAM officials in late October and early November (ref B) may be bearing fruit. The PG was more forthcoming than in previous meetings, foreshadowing changes to the PG anti-TIP unit he said we would appreciate. We also have just been told that about 27,000 USD for the GOAM's TIP National Plan of Action would be inserted into the draft 2007 budget. We are cautiously optimistic that senior Armenian leaders are getting the message that we are serious about improvement in Armenia's anti-TIP record. END SUMMARY.

PG FINALLY COMING AROUND

¶12. (C) On November 8, CDA met one-on-one with FM Oskanian to warn the GOAM that more action was needed on TIP to prevent a successive negative report for Armenia. CDA was blunt about our dissatisfaction with an investigation into allegations of impropriety. Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepian called in the Charge November 27 for a follow-up meeting, after the Foreign Ministry intervened with Hovsepian to relay our concerns. The November 27 meeting also followed our interventions with key presidential advisers, and the visit of U.S. OSCE Ambassador Julie Finley (reftels), in which we had communicated serious reservations about GOAM progress against trafficking. We had flagged the possibility that not only was Armenia not on a path to graduate from the Tier 2 Watch List based on achievements to date, but that it might even slip to Tier 3 status.

¶13. (C) The PG spent the first half of the 90-minute meeting extolling Armenia's positive work to combat trafficking, and comparing the country favorably to its neighbors. He also made many halfhearted excuses about his office's failure to conduct a thorough investigation into the spring 2006 allegations against one of the investigators who was also implicated in the August allegations. CDA maintained our position that we are concerned with the process -- a thorough and objective investigation -- rather than the result, and stayed tough on our points of contention (ref C).

¶4. (C) Having vented, the PG got down to business. He said that a copy of the internal investigation commission's final report was on its way to the Embassy. He said that, while the report included the investigators' conclusions, it did not include his own decision on how he would proceed. He also said the internal commission's conclusion contained "contradictory elements." (COMMENT: The PG was seemingly preparing the ground to be more responsive to our concerns than will be called for by the investigation report. END COMMENT.)

¶5. (C) One of the PG's staff visited us November 28 to deliver a copy of the conclusion, on which we will report septel. She told us the details of what she called the "restructuring" of the PG's anti-TIP Unit had not yet been nailed down, but would be forthcoming.

GOAM FINDS MONEY FOR NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

¶6. (C) That same staffer called the CDA in the evening of November 27 to inform him that the PG, the Prime Minister Andranik Markarian, and National Assembly Speaker Tigran Torosian had agreed that a line item on TIP would be inserted into the budget. Anna Aghadjanian, a member of the Interagency Anti-TIP Commission, told us November 29 that the cabinet had approved an amount of 10 million AMD (about 27,000 USD), and that the proposal would be forwarded to the parliament for further consideration.

¶7. (C) Though we had pushed an influential parliamentarian to propose the budget change several weeks ago (ref B), sources tell us the PG personally called the Prime Minister with the

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line item request following our meeting. The MP may have been working on it all along, but the PG was able to get it done within 24 hours.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) It is rewarding finally to see some movement on TIP after months of pushing the GOAM on the subject. We don't know what sort of "restructuring" of the anti-TIP Unit the PG has in mind, but suspect it may dilute the authority of investigator Aristakes Yeremyan, who now has been the subject of two internal investigations. The insertion of funding into the budget -- a very respectable amount, in the local context -- is the most positive development. The PG's involvement in the budget proposal is also a very positive sign, particularly given the fact that finding funding for anti-TIP programs is not in his office's mandate. Taken together, these indications suggest that the top echelons of Armenian government are finally taking notice that they need to work harder against trafficking.
GODFREY